

Commanding General's Perspective

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Major General Thurman, 4th Infantry Division Commander, expressed some interesting thoughts in his early February video teleconference. From the outset the General was enthusiastic and positive about the superb job our American service members and their Iraqi counterparts are doing to rebuild Iraq. He was also exceptionally happy with the way the rear detachment and family support groups were taking care of things on the home front.

The General reports that the transfer of authority is now complete and the 4th Infantry Division has gained responsibility for an area roughly the size of West Virginia. The land is varied in composition with rural and urban environments. Working inside this battle space is a composition of highly professional American and Iraqi service members. Their combined numbers are in excess of 50,000. These forces have the enemies of a free and democratic Iraq on the run. There are fewer and fewer attacks each week as the enemy has learned that to face coalition forces head on is a losing proposition. The Commanding General emphasized that it is easy for the news media to report on bombings, bad news, and tragedy. It is harder to report and sell the numerous instances of good news that occurs daily in Iraq.

For instance, American soldiers are credited with having opened over 300 new elementary schools across Iraq. Under Saddam's rule, education was a privilege given out to the privileged few. Now families are encouraging their children to go to school. Opportunities exist for all with no socio-economic discrimination.

Water and electricity are taken for granted in the United States, but to Iraqis these things were unreliable at best under Saddam's rule. The 4th Infantry Division recently opened a new water purification facility that services a grateful community of over 200,000 people who, until recently, had been getting their water from drainage canals. The General isn't sure why he hears complaints about electricity. He states that he flies over Baghdad every night and sees it lit up like Los Angeles.

With prosperity and freedom there has been a boom in the consumer electronic market. It appears that every home, hut, and shack has sprouted a satellite dish. Every home has television and radio. In fact, it has been pointed out that this may very well be why there is a strain on the electrical grid.

The men and women of the 4th Infantry Division are exceeding leader's expectations on a daily basis. Their moral is high and resolve absolute. They are dedicated to getting the job done and coming home to their families and loved ones. Never before in history has a soldier had better body armor. Their transportation is up-armored HMMWVs, Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles, or M1A2 Abrams Tanks. The enemy is on the run both figuratively and literally as Iraqis witness the most decisive time in their history. The men and women of the 4th Infantry Division are dedicated to mission accomplishment and a free and democratic Iraq.